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Boston University

Graduate School

Thesis

The Development of the Repertory Theatre

Submitted by

Ida Paly

A. B. Boston University 1922

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts.

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Introduction

Page 1.

I. Early precedents in England

- A. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre
- B. Congreve's Lincoln's Inn Fields
- C. Sheridans's Drury Lane
- D. Covent Garden

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p
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II Early Continental precedents

" 2.

- A. Molière's Petit Bourbon
- B. Goethe's Weimar Theatre

III. Later Continental examples

" 3.

- A. Comédie--Française
- B. Odeon
- C. Theatre--Libre
- D. Berlin Schauspielhaus
- E. Moscow Art Theatre

IV. What constitutes a Repertory Theatre

" 7.

- A. Aims of a repertory theatre
- B. Its organization
- C. Its functions

Development in England and America

I. Reasons for lagging in both countries

" 12.

- A. Puritan domination
- B. Divorce of Drama from Literature
- C. Drama becomes popular amusement
- D. The star system
- E. Dependence on foreign plays

Introduction

I. Early precedents in England

- A. Shakespeare's Swan Theatre
- B. Gough's 'a Lincoln's Inn Fields
- C. Shakespeare's Swan Lane
- D. Covent Garden

2.

II Early Continental precedents

- A. Moliere's Petit Bourbon
- B. Goethe's Weimar Theatre

3.

III. later Continental examples

- A. Comedie--Francaise
- B. Odon
- C. Theatre--Libre
- D. Berlin Schanzenbühne
- E. Moscow Art Theatre

7.

IV. What constitutes a Repertory Theatre

- A. Aims of a repertory theatre
- B. Its organization
- C. Its functions

Development in England and America

12.

I. Reasons for lagging in both countries

- A. Political domination
- B. Divorce of drama from literature
- C. Drama becomes popular amusement
- D. The star system
- E. Dependence on foreign plays

II. Commercial theatre leads to revolt Page 16.

A. The long-run and star system

III. Developments in England " 17.

A. Miss Horniman

B. The Stage Society

C. The Irish National Theatre

D. The Court Theatre

E. The Scottish Playgoers Co.

F. The Duke of York's Theatre

IV. Developments in America " 20.

A. The New Theatre in N. Y.

B. The Provincetown Players

C. The Pasadena Community Playhouse

D. The Goodman Memorial Theatre

E. Hampden's National Theatre

F. Eva Le Gallienne's Civic Repertory Theatre

G. The Jewett Repertory Theatre

Conclusion

I. The repertory theatre points forward " 23.

A. Educates the audience

B. Encourages the serious playwright

C. Develops better producers

D. Develops better actors

E. Fosters a training school

16. Page

II. Commercial theatre leads to revolt

A. The long-run and star system

17. "

III. Developments in England

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C. The Irish National Theatre

D. The Court Theatre

E. The Scottish Playhouse Co.

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18. "

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B. The Provincetown Players

C. The Theatre Community Playhouse

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19. "

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A. Educates the audience

B. Encourages the serious playwright

C. Develops better producers

D. Develops better actors

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The Development of the Repertory Theatre

"Life without art is mere brutality," says Ruskin. No art reflects the daily national life, no art has a more extensive contact with that life, than the drama. Drama can be and should be an instructor in the art of living and may be an instructor all the more successful in that the teaching is done by example rather than by precept. The theatre gives us an opportunity to play at life; thus the theatre becomes a laboratory in which we may experiment with the great rules of conduct.

How many people look forward to an evening's performance at the theatre as a means for an emotional outlet after a drab day's work. The character of a people may be fairly judged by the quality of their popular amusements. If what our theatrical managers say is true, then it would seem that the fare of the "tired business man" is our standard. But the successful development of the repertory theatre both here and abroad refutes this statement and challenges the managers of the commercial theatres to raise their standards. Sheldon Cheney in his book "The Art Theatre" says, "The commercial theatre's art is the art of commerce, art that will please the greatest number of average people, art that seeks appeal in sentiment and prettiness and sexual emotion and situations begetting uncontrolled laughter--a sort of Hearst's--Cosmopolitan--Ladies' Home Journal Art. With rare exceptions the art that goes beyond the obvious is discouraged, and the art that reaches down to deeper truths goes unrecognized. But the art theatre is rich in artistic taste, cultural background, creative energy, and imagination."

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Fortunately the dramatic instinct is perennial and universal. Though it is often childish, vulgar, and grotesque, though it is often repressed, yet there are periods of glorious promise and fulfillment. And for these dramatic cases we are indebted to the repertory theatre.

We of the English-speaking world are prone to delude ourselves in believing that the repertory theatre burst full grown from the forehead of this generation. But William Archer would remind us that it is not the repertory theatre that is of recent development--that has always been in existence; rather, the long-run system is of fairly recent development. With the over-grown modern city and the railway system that made touring of theatrical troupes possible, came the long run. All the great theatres of the world have been, and are today, repertory theatres. Shakespeare's Globe Theatre was a repertory theatre; so was Congreve's Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sheridan's Drury Lane, and the Covent Garden of the days of Kemble and Mrs. Siddons. On the continent Molière's Petit Bourbon, Holberg's Danish Theatre, Goethe's Weimar Theatre, and Ibsen's Bergen Theatre were all theatres of the repertory type. Today the Comédie-Française, the Odeon, the Vienna Burgtheater, all the great court and city theatres of Germany, and all the great Scandinavian theatres are repertory theatres. It is hardly possible to name a great play that has not been written for or produced at a repertory theatre.*

Let us examine some of the repertory theatres on the continent, that have been an inspiration to those who look for more sincere and artistic work in the theatres of England and America.

*William Archer--The Repertory Theatre.

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Let us examine some of the repository theatres on the continent.

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William Archer--The Repository Theatre.

The Comédie-Française is the national theatre of France supported by public funds for the purpose of advancing dramatic art. For a long time it was known as La Maison de Molière, even after it became a national institution by royal decrees, when, in 1680, two great bodies of actors, those of the Hotel de Bourgogne Theatre, and those of the Genegand Theatre were united. Two years after the amalgamation, the theatre received a royal grant of 12,000 livres (\$2,400) a year. Seven years later the theatre took the name of Comédie-Française, a name that has been perpetuated to this very day. The revolution of 1789 divided the theatre into two antagonistic political parties so that all public performances were temporarily suspended.

The organization of the Comédie-Française is typical of the repertory theatre. The government appoints a general manager of the theatre. There is a stock company as in any other business enterprise, the members of which divide the profits in accordance with the laws and regulations prescribed by the articles of incorporation of the organization. The theatre receives an annual pension of 240,000 francs from the government. The membership in the company is divided into sociétaires and pensionnaires: the former are regular members and receive a pension of 4000 francs after twenty years of service; the latter are paid actors who, after a certain length of service, may become sociétaires.

A summary of the program for the year 1909-10 is representative of the working schedule of the Comédie-Française. One hundred and fifteen different plays were given, only eighteen of which were presented for the first time that year. No revival was given more than thirty-two times throughout the year. In all, four hundred and sixty-five performances were given, nine performances being given during a

The Comedie-Francaise in the National Theatre of France and

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The organization of the Comedie-Francaise is typical of the repository theatre. The government appoints a general manager of the theatre. There is a stock company as in any other business enterprise, the members of which divide the profits in accordance with the law and regulations prescribed by the articles of incorporation of the corporation. The theatre receives an annual pension of 250,000 francs from the government. The membership in the company is divided into societaires and pensionnaires; the former are regular members and receive a pension of 4000 francs after twenty years of service; the latter are extra actors who, after a certain length of service, may become societaires.

A summary of the program for the year 1903-19 is representative of the working schedule of the Comedie-Francaise. One hundred and fifteen different plays were given, only sixteen of which were presented for the first time that year. No revival was given more than thirty-two times throughout the year. In all, four hundred and sixty-five performances were given, nine performances being given during

week. All performances were given by the permanent company made up of the sociétaires and pensionnaires. No principal actor or actress had to play more than eight different parts. The functioning of such a program keeps the actors fresh and the plays alive.

The Odeon, built in 1728, is next in importance to the Comédie-Française. It differs from the latter in that the repertory of plays is devoted principally to classical drama.

In 1887 a French actor, Antoine, founded the Theatre Libre in Paris. For nearly ten years he produced the most radical compositions of naturalistic and realistic writers. Without money and under the bitterest criticism of critics and the public at large, he clung to his ideals with determination and grit. Soon he had such notable realists and free-thinkers of the day as Lavedan, Tolstoi, and Zola writing for him. Later he founded the Theatre Antoine and, like many another radical in later life, omitted his earlier excesses. The Theatre Libre movement demolished many superstitions regarding the professionalism of the theatre, opened the theatre to new types of drama, substituted natural acting for the old artificiality, and introduced the simple setting or no setting at all. The Theatre Libre now is a theatre for the populace, subsidized by the government; the admission is practically free to all citizens.

The movement began in France spread to Germany where, in 1889, the Freie Buhne was founded in Berlin. This was a private or subscription venture to evade censorship. The supporters of the theatre were in rebellion against the monopolies of the commercial theatre and were definitely dedicated to naturalism and realism as an art standard. Whereas in France the movement had been narrower, in that French drama was produced almost exclusively, in Germany the Freie Buhne was truly

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a free theatre in the international sense. It broke the magic spell of tradition that had held Germany spell-bound and cleared the way for new ideas of stage productions.

The German theatre began to throw off the shackles of the realistic stage about 1905, and her artistic freedom was fairly complete by 1914. The artistic development of the German theatre was founded on the ideals of Craig and Appia and culminated in the aspirations of Max Reinhardt. This development was due partly to a few talented directors but largely to the splendid organization of the German theatre itself. Each duchy had a repertory theatre of its own. Endowment and the security of a permanent audience make it possible for German theatres to give excellent performances and at very low prices.

In a country from which we have often been led to expect the unexpected we have the greatest repertory theatre of them all, the Moscow Art Theatre. The Moscow Art Theatre is like an art institution or a craftsmen's cooperative society.* It began when Dantchenko, a dramatic teacher and writer, revolted against the conservatism of the established Russian theatre. He became a partner with Stanislavsky who until then was known only through his connection with amateur theatricals. The first company was made up of amateurs, and rehearsals took place in a barn in the suburbs of Moscow. At first the venture was severely abused by the critics. The Moscow Art started out as a reform theatre, the object being to explore regions untouched by the regular theatres.

At first, in imitation of Antoine and the Theatre Libre, the Moscow Art turned to realism. The plays of Anton Tchekov brought the first great success to the theatre. With the plays of Gorky, Ibsen,

*Theatre Arts Monthly-January, 1916.

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Theatre Arts Monthly-January, 1915.

Tolstoy, and Hauptmann came the reign of realism; by detailed imitation an attempt to create the illusion of life was made. The old trickery and conventionality in acting, a hang-over of the romantic movement, was ruthlessly destroyed.

Since the company was truly made up of inspired artists, they could not long remain satisfied with mere realism. The second phase was a venture in imaginative drama, lyrical, poetic, and symbolic. A symbolic setting was used in staging *The Blue Bird*. The most classic example of simplified staging was the Moscow Art Theatre's presentation of *Hamlet* with Gordon Craig's folding screens.

After the pendulum had swung in either direction, the third phase was a compromise, an attempt to interpret the realistic stage spiritually, an attempt to be true to life, but to attain artistic rather than photographic truth.

As to the organization of the company:

(1) It is a non-star organization; a perfect ensemble effect is the aim. Preferably, the actors are trained from youth by the members of the Art Theatre; and for this purpose a studio is established.

(2) The theatre is administered profitably, but the business men in charge of the financial end of the enterprise have nothing to say about the types of play or methods of staging.

(3) The administration is three-fold:

(a) A board of directors of men of high ideals and artists of broad insight control the general policy.

(b) The actors are at a lower wage because they love their work and appreciate steady employment. After five years of service they share in the profits.

(c) The artist director and business secretary do not inter-

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ferre with each other, nor is either interfered with by the governing board so long as the results are satisfactory.

Fifteen plays are presented each year, of which three or four are new. The theatre in which the company is now housed seats about eleven hundred people. The stage is properly equipped for art production with the finest modern improvements. Even the audience is imbued with co-operative spirit since nearly all the seats are sold under the yearly subscription plan. Incidentally, the seats cost less than in America.

Before we turn our attention to the recent development of the repertory theatre in England and America, let us first consider what are the aims, organization, and function of such a theatre. The repertory theatre is not a theatre of fads and frills, not an ultra-radical theatre, nor a propaganda theatre. It seeks to keep abreast of the times rather than ahead of them. "The repertory theatre should be national, representative, and popular."*

The different types of insurgent theatre, such as the repertory, art, and little theatres differ as to aim and method; but all are alike in their effort to change conditions for the better. High ticket prices are an evil of the commercial theatre that the repertory seeks to banish and succeeds in doing so. For this purpose the theatre cannot depend on long runs with intermittent spells of poor patronage; it must have a habitual patronage. In many repertory theatres performances are given to students at reduced prices. This is a gain for the theatre in the future as the students become habitual theatre-goers and strong supporters of the repertory idea.

The duties of the repertory theatre are as follows:

*Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre--Archer and Barker.

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supporters of the repository idea.

The duties of the repository theatre are as follows:

Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre--English and American.

(1)to protect the commercial side until the theatre can pay its own way;

(2)to keep alive plays of literary value until they can gain the public's favor;

(3)to give constant performances of classical masterpieces but to make the living drama of the day the chief concern;

(4)to give revivals of modern works of the last generation which had literary quality and which drew a public;

(5)to offer training in the art of acting.*

(1)As for the protection of the commercial side, the state can spend its money in no better way than by supporting the drama. This can be done by giving supplementary aid until the theatre is firmly established. We have already seen that in France the Comédie-Française still receives state aid. In Boston we have the example of the Repertory Theatre that is tax exempt though it receives no other state aid.

(2)In the commercial theatre we have often seen examples of a play that has begun as a failure and then, if kept on the boards long enough, turns out to be either a commercial or an artistic success. "Abie's Irish Rose" began as a failure and has now succeeded in making millions for its author. "In Abraham's Bosom" also began as a theatrical flop but was later awarded the Pulitzer Prize. It is the duty of the repertory theatre to keep a play on the stage long enough to test its true worth.

(3)If classical plays have a universal appeal they should be able to attract and hold the attention of a modern audience. A performance

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of a classical masterpiece in the commercial theatre often fails because the play is merely a vehicle for the mannerisms of some popular idol. The repertory, stressing ensemble acting, can give a performance of a classic drama with great success.

(4) Again, revivals of successful plays of the last generation, if artistically put on, are very much worthwhile and prove successful. Last year the revival of "Trelawney of the Wells" proved such a success. The Gilbert and Sullivan operettas that Winthrop Ames has been producing these last two seasons are another example.

(5) The art of the theatre has of late become a synthetic art. The repertory theatre while not essentially an experimental theatre must yet, in the nature of things, give considerable attention to new lighting devices, stage settings, and costuming. Such men as Craig, Appia, and Reinhardt have made many important transformations in the art of the theatre.

(6) How many of our older theatre-goers mourn the clear enunciation, the perfect poise, the graceful gesticulation, the varied interpretation of the actors of a by-gone day. Is it because the actors of our day are of an inferior species or is it because they lack the proper training? In the "good old days" an actor served a long apprenticeship in stock, and it was only after long years of hard work that he reached stardom. Today the rise of a star occurs overnight either due to the caprice of the manager, or because the actor concerned is physically suited to the particular role. The studios of the Moscow Art Theatre are an integral part of the organization for the purpose of training the young actors who later have an opportunity of joining the parent company.

In organizing a repertory theatre the plan which has proved the

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In organizing a repertory theatre the plan which has proved the

most successful is the one under which the responsibility is three-fold:

(1)A holding-group which owns the theatre or represents the owners; this group determines the policy of the theatre and is a court of last appeal for all questions arising in the two administrative departments;

(2)an artistic director who is responsible for every activity behind the curtain, and has complete power in everything pertaining to production;

(3)a business manager who is responsible for the front-of-the-house administration.*

It is the purpose of the controlling group to determine the general policy of the theatre. For a smooth-running administration this group should be a self-perpetuating body, and should be made up of art lovers and business men. This group is a go-between between the membership or audience on the one hand and the artist-director and business manager on the other. It holds the only check on the director and must decide the action on all controversies between the temperamental director and the hard-headed business manager. That there are many such controversies has been proved only too well; many a repertory has failed because artistic enthusiasm would not cooperate with practical budget-making.

The artist-director must have complete charge of the staging. The electrician, the scene-designer, the costumer, the actor, all must look to him for their orders. He should be free from interference by the controlling group and the only limitation the business-manager may put on him is that of the budget.

most successful is the one under which the responsibility is three-fold.

(1) A holding-group which owns the theatre or represents the owner.

Next, this group determines the policy of the theatre and is a court of last appeal for all questions arising in the two administrative departments.

(2) An artistic director who is responsible for every activity on the stage.

He has complete power in everything pertaining to production.

(3) A business manager who is responsible for the front-of-the-

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It is the purpose of the controlling group to determine the general policy of the theatre. For a smooth-running administration this group should be a self-perpetuating body, and should be made up of art-lovers and business men. This group is a go-between between the management or audience on the one hand and the artist-director and business manager on the other. It holds the only check on the director and must decide the action on all controversies between the management and the artist-director and the hard-headed business manager. That there are many such controversies has been proved only too well; many a reputation has failed because artistic enthusiasm would not cooperate with practical budget-making.

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The relation of the business-manager to the holding-group is like that of the supervising manager of a business corporation to the board of directors. He has complete charge of everything before the curtain, that is, in front of the house, since a non-commercial theatre need by no means mean an unbusiness-like theatre. His relation to the artist-director need not extend beyond a determination of the amount to be spent by the producing department. As for his duties, he has charge of: ticket sales including subscriptions and box office sales; house management; advertising; book-keeping, paying out moneys, and budget-making.

Archer and Barker in their "Scheme and Estimates for a National Theatre" would have a staff of five officials appointed by the trustees:

(1)a director with absolute control of everything except the reading of plays;

(2)a literary manager who would serve in the capacity of the German Dramaturg;

(3)a business manager;

(4)a solicitor who would be the secretary to the board;

(5)a reading-committee man.

In putting into practice the repertory idea even such a theatre as the Comédie-Française has been criticized for being too narrowly national to serve the best interests of French dramatic art. Variety is absolutely necessary in the repertory of plays. A catholic repertory will include classic and modern drama, the work of both foreign and native dramatists, and both poetic and realistic plays. The play of pure propaganda is out of place in an art theatre.

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Archer gives his opinion as follows:

"When we speak of a repertory, we mean a number of plays always ready

for performance, with nothing more than a run-through rehearsal, which, therefore, can be, and are, acted in such alternation that three, four, or five different plays may be given in the course of a week. New plays are from time to time added to the repertory, and those of them which succeed may be performed fifty, seventy, a hundred times, or even more, in the course of one season; but no play is ever performed more than two or three times in uninterrupted succession."

The repertory theatre can make some money but not much, since large profits can only be made in speculative enterprises. Since the repertory theatre aims at an artistic rather than a financial success, endowment is necessary.

And now as to the housing of the repertory idea. The auditorium should not be too large for clear sight and easy hearing from any seat in the house. There should be a feeling of at-homeness and intimacy between the actors and the audience. Both stage and auditorium must be designed primarily for the modern play and yet be suitable for revivals. This is more preferable than building the theatre for spectacular plays and then attempting to produce the popular intimate drama of today. A theatre with a seating capacity of from 1000 to 1500 seems admirable. Both the Comédie and the Odeon seat 1200; the Burgtheater, Vienna, 1474; and the Deutsches Volkstheatre, Vienna, 1873.

Since the repertory theatre has been so long and so successfully established on the continent it will be interesting to study the reasons for its tardy development both in England and in the United States.

Though both the English and the Americans pride themselves on being broadminded as far as religion (among many other things) is concerned, if the truth were to be told both peoples are by and large very bigoted. H. R. Jones in his "Foundations of a National Drama" says,

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"Religion easily runs riot to fear, meanness, and madness. Imbecility and paralysis of drama today are due to an insane rage of Puritanism that would see nothing in the theatre but a horrible, unholy thing to be crushed and stamped out of existence."

Another cause for the retarded development in England and America is the divorce of English drama from English literature "of which it is the highest and most difficult form and of which it should be the chief ornament."* In France we have had great traditions of authorship for over 200 years. As a result the average playgoer can find both amusement and delight in plays that are also literature. Immediately after Moliere we have Restoration comedy in England, comedy in imitation of Moliere himself. In spite of its weak construction and loose morality, the splendor of its art and its vivid portraiture of town life insure it a lasting place in English literature. Since then we have had little literature in drama. In France, on the other hand, we have had a continuous stream from Moliere to the present time: Regnard, Marivaux, Beaumarchais, Dumas, de Musset, Delavigne, Augier, Labiche, and many writing today. There is scarcely a writer of the first rank who has not been successful on the stage. Also, every play by a leading French playwright is published and discussed as literature.

Brander Matthews says: "Only literature is permanent. If your drama is truly alive, it will necessarily be literature."

It was the insurgent theatre of one kind or another that encouraged men of letters to write for the theatre and thus brought to the attention of the public such men as Galsworthy, Barker, Shaw and O'Neill.

A third cause was the deterioration of drama into mere popular

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amusement. This does not mean that a play must be dull in order to be judged a literary masterpiece. Shakespeare's plays were all first-class entertainment, but they were also something more. But to such plays as "Cradle Snatchers" that are so popular today, it is a misnomer to apply the term drama.

The development of the star system and its concurrent evils was another cause. With lack of training schools for actors there was no means of giving promising novices the necessary practice in varied roles. Many inexperienced and often incompetent actors and actresses were elevated as stars. The star system means loss of freedom for the artist and lack of opportunity for artistic development. "We haven't one theatre artist internationally important," says Sheldon Cheney in his book "The Art Theatre." It is only in such theatres as the Comédie and the Moscow Art that the artist has every opportunity to give of his best.

And finally, a widespread dependence on translations and adaptations of foreign plays was another important contributory cause. This device assured the manager of the commercial theatre of success, for the play had already been tried out on the continent. But it shut the door in the face of every aspiring English and American dramatist. Even today, under slightly better conditions, the French farce is still highly popular in our theatres.

Jones has made an interesting classification of audiences that have in his opinion affected the theatre by their attitude:

- (1) Large masses of mere amusement seekers newly enfranchised from the prison house of Puritanism, without traditions or judgment;
- (2) A large class of moderate, reasonable, respectable people who go to the theatre occasionally, with a feeling of discomfort at having done a frivolous thing;

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(3) A third class containing some of the soundest and best elements of the Anglo Saxon race; an influential religious class in more or less active hostility to the theatre.

In condemning the commercial theatre as cheap, money-mad, and reactionary, we must still give the devil his due and admit that the stage owes much to the actor-manager and the long-run; but that it is their predominance over the whole field of theatrical enterprise that has proved harmful.

Walter Prichard Eaton in his book "At the New Theatre and Others" gives us a vivid picture of the dominance of the commercial theatre. For almost fifteen years preceding the season 1908-09 the Theatrical Syndicate had been the "pater Familias" of the theatre, domineering and dictatorial. Theatre managers throughout the country could book only those plays sponsored by the Syndicate. If a manager had any high ideals of dramatic art it was disastrous for him to attempt to live up to them. He must accept only those plays the Syndicate approved of, and they approved only those plays that were financially successful. The young playwright wishing to make his mark, the artist desirous of creating an artistic setting, the actor eager to give a serious and artistic interpretation, all were equally discouraged.

The commercial theatre made its appeal to the many and as a result had put itself in the class of big business. Every city production has a high expenditure for rent, newspaper advertisements, signboards and circulars, salaries, and royalties, to say nothing about scenery, rehearsal halls, and manager's profits. A production to stay alive had to make 7000 dollars a week or more. On this account artistic experimentation was difficult and dangerous, and the theatre became a speculative business. The evil effects were (1) loss of freedom for

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the artist; (2)destruction of training-grounds for the actor and the playwright to gain experience; (3)ruinous control by New York over all the important theatres in the country; (4)the playwrights were "kept" to repeat a formula that had proved successful in one play, or to adapt foreign successes; (5)the star system was evolved, which proved the worst possible example for the growing actor.

It was fitting and proper that the first signs of insurgency should come from the actors themselves. The actor had wearied of the monotonous repetition of the long-run. Eva Le Galliene, speaking in the Boston Public Library during the winter of 1927, spoke of the stifling monotony of playing in Lilliom night after night during its long and successful run; and of the joy and the opportunity to grow in the Civic Repertory Co. where she might play in the idyllic "Cradle Song" one night, and in the powerful "Master Builder" the next. A serious lesson may be learned from the fact that whereas the star system began by exalting the art of acting at the expense of the other arts of the theatre, it ended by destroying that art with the others. The big actors who were raised above the others lost their perspective and failed to grow bigger. The little actors tried to imitate the big ones instead of developing their own talents. Many managers made stars of those actors who appealed to the public regardless of ability or training.

Barker* states that there was nothing to go by in establishing an endowed theatre in England and that conditions were such that England could not imitate the continent. He looked to some provincial centre such as Manchester or Birmingham rather than London for the first prac-

*Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre--Archer and Barker.

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It was fitting and proper that the first signs of anarchy should come from the actors themselves. The actor had worried at the monotonous repetition of the long-run. He la Gallienne, speaking in the Boston Public Library during the winter of 1932, spoke of the actor's monotony of playing in fifteen nights after night during the long and successful run; and of the joy and the opportunity to grow in the Civic Repertory Co. where she might play in the "Creditor's Son" one night, and in the powerful "Master Builder" the next. A serious lesson may be learned from the fact that whereas the star system began by exalting the art of acting at the expense of the other arts of the theatre, it ended by destroying that art with the others. The old actors who were raised above the others lost their perspective and failed to grow bigger. The little actors tried to imitate the big ones instead of developing their own talents. Many managers made actors of those actors who appealed to the public regardless of ability or training.

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In 1903 the first repertory theatre in the English-speaking world was established in Dublin, due to the untiring efforts of Miss Horniman. In 1907 the Gaiety Theatre was founded in Manchester; and with this enterprise Miss Horniman's name is particularly associated.

W. B. Yeats founded in 1891 The National Literary Society. This society, eager for "something better than the ordinary play of commerce," founded the Irish Literary Theatre seven years later, aiming to do what the Theatre Libre had done in Paris. A circular letter signed by Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Edward Martyn, sent to people interested in reviving the Irish national consciousness, gave the aims as follows:

"We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all political questions that divide us."

At first English actors were brought over. But in 1901 performances were given by a company of Irish amateurs called the Irish National Dramatic Co., and later became known as the Irish National Theatre Society. They accomplished a great deal with little expenditure. To the amazed delight of London audiences they produced in that

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city, in 1903, "The Hour-Glass," "Kathleen Ni Houlihan", and "Twenty-five".

Miss Horniman later leased the Abbey Theatre, rebuilt it, gave its free use to the Irish National Theatre Society, and a small annual subsidy.

The first concern was with the creation of a folk-drama. As a result the acting was naturalistic. Much attention was also given to form. In Synge the Abbey Theatre produced a significant dramatist, one who combined poetry with realism. The same theatre developed Lady Gregory.

This repertory company became a model for others. They perform in Dublin for four months and then tour Ireland, and visit Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds and London. Prices range from three-shilling stalls to six-penny seats in the pit. Special subscription tickets are issued for a series of productions. "They have created a taste for sincere and original drama, and for sincere, quiet, and simple acting."*

The Court Theatre, a venture initiated by Barker and Vedrenne, was founded the same year as the Abbey Theatre. It was not a repertory in the real sense of the word: they gave 988 performances of 32 plays by 17 authors, but 701 were performances of 11 plays by Shaw. It was more in the nature of a Shaw repertory theatre. It was an experimental theatre and highly worthwhile because it encouraged such men as Galsworthy, Harkin, Masfield, and Barker.

The Scottish Playgoers Company, Limited, was organized to make Scottish audiences independent of the London touring Company. The Play-

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ers opened at the Royalty in April, 1909, and achieved a remarkable success. They stated their aims as follows:

(1)"To establish in Glasgow a Repertory Theatre which will afford playgoers and those interested in the Drama an opportunity of witnessing such plays as are rarely presented under the present touring company system.

(2)To organize a stock company of first-class actors and actresses for the adequate representation of such plays.

(3)To conduct the business of theatrical managers and play producers in Glasgow and other places, so as to stimulate a popular interest in the more cultured, important, and permanent forms of dramatic art.

(4)To encourage the initiation and development of a purely Scottish Drama by providing a stage and an acting company which will be peculiarly adapted for the production of plays national in character, written by Scottish men and women of letters."

The Glasgow School of Art cooperated in designing scenery and costumes. The artistic success was so great that enthusiastic subscribers made up the losses, until the theatre could stand on its own feet. During the first four seasons they gave 47 plays; 16 new, 28 revivals, and 3 translations and classics. There is a racial self-expression in such plays as "Barbara Grows Up" by George J. Hanlen; and "Macpherson" by Neil Munro. They have also developed some excellent actors.

The Duke of York's Repertory Theatre, Mr. Frohman's project, opened February 21, 1910. The season lasted 17 weeks. 128 performances of 28 plays were given: 2 modern tragedies, 1 modern high-comedy, 1 comedy of manners in an early Victorian setting, 1 mid-Victorian historical

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comedy, 1 modern comedy of ideas, 1 fantasy, 1 modern realistic play, 1 modern farcical comedy and 1 modern conventional comedy. Whereas the repertory of plays at the Dublin, Manchester, and Glasgow theatres had a unified aim at one public, there was no such definite aim at the Duke of York's Theatre. In aiming to please several publics they failed to please any. This venture failed as an artistic achievement because it did not in any way perform all that it had promised.

America on the whole is more hospitable to advanced drama than England. Early in the 20th century the United States began to feel the influence of the independent theatre movements in Europe. It was the Irish Theatre that had the greatest influence of all. Yeats visited America in the season of 1903-04 and fired our imaginations. We began to apply the principles of the Irish Theatre to our own. Then the Irish players themselves came in 1911, inculcating within us the ideals of naturalness and simplicity. A further incentive was the arrival of Miss Horniman's company from Manchester in 1913.

Movements were started by enthusiastic groups as early as 1910, many ostensibly for social and educational propaganda. An early interesting experiment that ended in failure was the organization called the Drama Players of the Chicago Theatre Society headed by Donald Robertson. The repertory was excellent; the first season proved successful and the company went on tour. The second season proved a failure due to: lack of a proper theatre; lack of understanding by subscribers; disastrous experiments with unsuccessful American plays; lack of funds.

The Drama League deserves mention for being the publicity committee of the whole insurgent movement. The organization is not made up of experts but of theatre-goers interested in the theatre from the au-

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Movements were started by enthusiastic groups as early as 1910, many catered for social and educational propaganda. An early interesting experiment that ended in failure was the organization called the Green Players of the Chicago Theatre Society headed by Donald Robertson. The repertory was excellent; the first season proved successful and the company went on tour. The second season proved a failure due to lack of a proper theatre; lack of understanding by subscribers; disastrous experiments with unsuccessful American plays; lack of funds. The Drama League deserves mention for being the publicly recognized of the whole insurgent movement. The organization is not made up of experts but of theatre-goers interested in the theatre from the au-

dience's point of view. The League is most successful in the exchange of ideas. They support professional plays; publish plays; encourage local responsibility to the theatre; and support periodical publications on theatre matters.

The New Theatre was built in New York in 1909 by a group of men wealthy and socially prominent. The endowment was raised by 30 men each subscribing \$35,000 to initiate the enterprise. It was a difficult proposition to sell the repertory idea to a land that had become accustomed to long runs, stars, and spectacular shows. This however, will not account for the final failure of the New Theatre. The architect had erred greatly in building an opera-house rather than a theatre. The wealthy subscribers had to be compensated with an array of conspicuous boxes where they might be seen to best advantage as in the Metropolitan Opera House. It was when such a play as *Strife* was given that the theatre was found inadequate because of its size.

During the first season of 24 weeks, 13 plays were presented: 4 classics, 3 original works by American authors, and 2 by contemporary English dramatists. The theatre couldn't afford to pay sufficiently high royalties to tempt native writers away from the commercial theatre.

But the chief difficulty in this enterprise was that the theatre was not evolved from the artistic needs and aspirations of the people; it was something imposed entirely from without.

Of all the ventures that of the Provincetown Players on Macdougall Street was the most truly experimental. The group was made up of amateurs who made no pretense of being professionals. A group of artists and authors, inspired by George Cram Cook and his wife, Susan Glaspell, began to write and present plays in an old shack in Provincetown during

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Of all the ventures that of the Provincetown Players on Broadway Street was the most truly experimental. The group was made up of amateurs who made no pretence of being professionals. A group of artists and authors, inspired by George Cohan and his wife, Susan Gillessen, began to write and present plays in an old shack in Provincetown during

the summer's vacation. Eight years later they had to close because they could not keep to their ideal of American plays due to the lack of material. The venture would have been worthwhile if for no other reason than because it had introduced to the theatrical world Eugene O'Neill.

Recently other interesting and worthwhile undertakings have been launched.

The Pasadena Community Playhouse began very simply when a group of enthusiasts, unwilling to let the defection of the road mean the end of spoken drama, took matters into their own hands at the end of the war. Since then under the wise and talented leadership of the director, Gilmer Brown, the theatre has grown into one of the best equipped, most ambitious and professional of Little Theatres. The plays are picked to suit the audience, without imposing the dramatic will of the directors upon the community. Thus the theatre has become a means of artistic expression for the community. Since May 31, 1927, there has been a change in the policy of the theatre, by adopting a carefully planned repertory system. Plans to open a theatre school are also under way, making of the Pasadena Community Playhouse a real repertory theatre.

The Goodman Memorial Theatre was built in Chicago by the parents of Kenneth Sawyer Goodman, in honor of his memory. Thomas Wood Stevens, former head of the department of drama at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, organized a company to function like one of the ancient guilds: that is, to act, design, make costumes, paint scenery, and instruct the student actors. A program of important standard and contemporary plays not previously shown in Chicago, a small number of classical revivals, and some new plays of merit and experimental interest, make up the repertory of plays. The Studio Company, a group of students

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who come for three years' professional training, cooperate with and are subordinate to the Repertory Company.

Walter Hampden is running a repertory theatre at the National Theatre. Here he is appearing in such successes as "Cyrano de Bergerac", "The Servant in the House", and a Shakespearian repertoire.

Eve Le Gallienne, a young and gifted actress, took over the 14th Street Theatre in 1926. She began her repertory season with Benavente's "Saturday Night". Soon the New Yorkers were thronging to this renovated, old, out-of-the-way theatre to "The Cradle Song," "La Locandiera", and "The Master Builder". After the repertory season the company made a successful tour. Miss Le Gallienne this year is repeating her success of the year preceding.

The Repertory Theatre of Boston, like many another repertory theatre so-called, is not a repertory in the real sense of the word. The plays are not alternated. They are run for a week or two in succession. The theatre under Mr. Henry Jewett has had a checkered career resulting in a split and the formation of two companies, one under Mr. Jewett, and the other under Mr. Clive, one of his actors. In accordance with the repertory idea, there is a fund subscribed to by wealthy and interested citizens, prices are low, and the Attorney General has declared the theatre exempt from taxes on the basis of its educational purposes. While the players are not all that can be desired, the repertory of plays is interesting and worthwhile. Many are such that a Boston audience would have no opportunity of seeing at any of the local theatres.

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self-respect and vitality. It has substituted sanity for prudery, artistic simplicity for gaudy lavishness.

The repertory theatre is giving us dramatists of ability in the place of hack-writers. The new dramatists possess a strong literary sense and are seriously concerned with the methods of realism. To be sure, those authors who write for the repertory theatre do not earn as much from royalties as in the long-run theatre, but plays of this type would not be likely to appeal to the audiences of the long-run. If he does not make as much money he has, on the other hand, the following advantages:

(1) he is not forced to conform to the demands of the actor-manager for a star part;

(2) the risk of absolute failure is minimized due to constant patronage;

(3) his plays have a chance to go to the "little" theatres of smaller cities.

At the head of a repertory theatre a trained and competent manager has an unusual opportunity for independent and unhampered work in carrying out his artistic ideas, whether they apply to lighting, setting, or acting.

To no one has the repertory theatre been a greater benefit than to the actor himself. Instead of the actor who has a physical resemblance to the part, we will have the kind of actor who can give us an individualized impersonation of characters radically different from each other. In repertory acting, versatility is of greater importance than virtuosity. The actor needs imagination and a sympathetic observation.

And finally the repertory theatre, since the training school is

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a vital part of the organization, will develop the young men and women who may later be given an opportunity to join the company. The students understand that a position with the company is not assured them, but they are given an opportunity of associating with and learning from the company. The school may in time develop into a dramatic college.

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Summary

The repertory theatre is not as new as the average English and American theatre-goer supposes. On the continent we have a precedent in such theatres as Molière's Petit Bourbon, Goethe's Weimar, and Ibsen's Bergen Theatre. Today, all the great theatres in Europe, whether court or municipal theatres, are of the repertory type.

The Comédie-Française is typical of the repertory theatre. The theatre receives an annual pension from the government, which in turn appoints a general manager of the theatre. There is a stock company the members of which divide the profits. The acting company is divided into sociétaires and pensionnaires. After twenty years of service the sociétaires are pensioned.

The Théâtre Libre, founded by Antoine, started a movement that broke down the barriers erected by the professional theatre, and paved the way for new types of drama, simple settings, and natural acting. This movement in France paved the way for similar ventures in Germany.

It was in "darkest Russia" with the founding of the Moscow Art Theatre by Dantchenko, and its later developments, that this movement reached its highest pinnacle. Begun as an amateur venture by a group whose one ideal was beauty, they achieved the greatest artistic success. The first emphasis was on realism, then symbolism, and finally a spiritual interpretation of realism. Perfect ensemble acting is the aim.

The repertory theatre must not be thought of as an ultra-radical or propaganda theatre. Rather, its aims are (1) to keep plays of literary value alive until public favor is gained; (2) to give performances of classical performances, but to give greater prominence to current drama; (3) to revive worthwhile plays of the last generation; (4) to put drama

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into sympathy with the other arts; (5)to offer training in the art of acting.

In organizing a repertory theatre the following plan has been found most successful: (1)a holding-group which owns the theatre or represents the owners; (2)an artistic director who has complete power in everything pertaining to the production; (3)a business manager who is responsible for the front-of-the-house administration.

Although the repertory theatre has been long established on the continent, its development in England and America was slow, due to the following reasons: (1)a narrow Puritanism that looks upon the theatre with horror; (2)the divorce of English drama from English literature; (3)a low standard of drama, resulting in its deterioration into mere popular amusement; (4)the development of the star system and its concurrent evils; (5)a wide-spread dependence on translations and adaptations of foreign plays.

The development of the repertory theatre in the English-speaking world owes more to Miss Horniman than to any other one person. The first English-speaking repertory theatre was founded in Dublin in 1903. The Irish National Theatre Society, like the Moscow Art Theatre, started out as a group of amateurs, absorbed in their ideal of interpreting Irish life. This company became a model for others. The Court Theatre was more in the nature of a Shaw Repertory Theatre. The Scottish Players Company did for Scottish drama what the Irish players had done for Irish drama. The Duke of York's Repertory Theatre failed because the aims were not unified, and they did not attempt to achieve what they had promised.

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Players to this country. The New Theatre in New York is a memorable example of how a repertory theatre should not be organized. The chief fault lay in the fact that the theatre was not a natural outgrowth of the needs and ideals of the community. Later ventures that proved successful are: The Provincetown Players; Hampden's Repertory Theatre; and the Civic Repertory Theatre.

The repertory theatre points forward to a bright and promising future. It deserves to succeed because of what it aims to do and what it has done: The repertory theatre (1)educates the audience to an appreciation of better plays; (2)encourages the serious playwright; (3)develops more artistic producers; (4)develops more serious and artistic actors; (5)provides a training school for the actors of tomorrow.

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